



# the connection

Summer 2024

**Softball  
Outreach  
2024**

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# Softball Outreach 2024

The We Care Softball Outreach is a lot of work to put together, but it is a lot of fun when it goes as planned. Here is an inside look at this year's event through the eyes of We Care President, Don Metzler.

## Thursday

I arrived at the We Care office before 8:00 AM to wrap up a few last-minute details before making the two-hour trek to Montgomery for the orientation. After getting everything buttoned down for my absence, I headed north.

Arriving at Taylor Road Baptist Church a little after 10:00 AM, I located the room we were assigned to use for our gathering. I walked in to find several big burly softball players draped over chairs they had pushed together, trying to catch a few winks of sleep. Having driven from Pennsylvania during the night, they were somewhat bedraggled. Seeing me they perked up a bit, and we chatted together while guys from the other five teams trickled in. By 11:00 AM the room was full of men who were excited to get the show on the road.

Kevin Kennell led in our brief training with the goal of helping the new guys know what to expect and reminding everyone what is expected of them. He talked about details such as making sure their ball equipment bags were thoroughly cleaned out before entering each prison. The story of a bullet found in a bag the previous year was a good example of the importance of this particular step!

Following the training, all 55+ guys donned their red 2024 outreach shirts for pictures before eating a delicious lunch prepared by We Care hosts, Steve and Sara Petersheim. After lunch the three teams assigned to the Atmore area drove down the interstate to reach their prisons in time for the afternoon games.

As instructed by the chaplain at Staton CF, I called

him around 1:00 PM to verify whether we could go in and play ball. He said the fields were too wet due to storms that morning. Since the other two prisons where the Montgomery area teams were slated to play were south of where the storms had moved through, we split the team that was scheduled for Staton and sent half to Bullock CF and half to Kilby CF. With Kilby being nearby, the players going there had a little extra time, so they went out to a grassy field for some batting practice.

After about an hour, I went with the Erb team and half of the Pennyrile team to Kilby. Arriving at the prison right at shift change at 2:00, we had to wait about 20 minutes before getting inside. The softball field at Kilby is enclosed in a fence outside the main camp, so we were able to enter directly into the field without going through the camp. We had permission to take photos there, and I served as photographer. I ended up in that role the entire weekend, instead of playing ball, because of a back issue I was dealing with. After a lopsided game which was won by the We Care team, we mixed up the teams and played a couple more games. One of the DOC chaplains brought a cordless sound system to use for calling balls and strikes, as well as for playing fun music between innings. It was a great afternoon and the inmates expressed a lot of appreciation that we came in to play ball. In fact, one inmate, who led in prayer as we closed, thanked God for allowing them to enjoy a few hours of fun where it didn't feel like they were in prison!

After the ball games I went with the Pennyrile team to find our lodging at a local Airbnb. The Erb and Carter teams also stayed at Airbnb homes. We had a challenge getting the rooming details figured out, but after we were finally able to gain access to all the promised rooms, everything turned out well. After showers we went to a





restaurant to eat, only to be told by the hostess that they could not accommodate us because they had several other large groups (one of them was the Erb team) and only three waitresses (two of them being new). She told us if we came back the next night she would make sure we would be accommodated. We went down the street to another restaurant and enjoyed a very good dinner. After eating we made a run by Walmart for breakfast foods.

### Friday

The next morning we (the Pennyrile team and I) were up early to eat breakfast before heading to Bibb CF. Storms again on Thursday night made us wonder whether we would be allowed in to play ball. We arrived after traveling about 90 minutes and found out the ball field was too muddy to play. Thankfully, the Warden approved us to go into the dorms where We Care is leading our Pathway to Freedom program. We had about 90 minutes of interaction with the inmates in those dorms. As we were leaving, the Pennyrile guys commented about their disappointment of not getting to play softball but that visiting with the inmates in the dorms was actually better. While we were blessed with that opportunity, the Carter team had a different experience that afternoon. Being told that the field was playable, they traveled the hour and a half to Bibb. However, after arriving, they were then informed the field was not playable and were sent to the same dorm but allowed to stay only about 15 minutes. Naturally, they were disappointed, but that's just how things go sometimes in prison ministry.

After leaving Bibb, the Pennyrile team and I went by Chick-fil-a for lunch before we headed back to Kilby for our afternoon game. Once again the chaplain was very accommodating and got us in without any difficulty. With



water standing in the infield, the players had even turned the playing field when the Carter team was there that morning. They moved home plate to the left-field corner and made it work that way. The water on the original infield that was now right field was almost gone by the time we finished playing the last game of the day. After another lopsided victory by the visiting team, the Pennyrile team and inmates mixed up and had a lot of fun playing a more competitive game.

After getting cleaned up at our Airbnb, the Pennyrile team and I went back to the restaurant where we had gone first the night before. This time we were seated and served in spite of their being busy and short-staffed again. It's always fun to fellowship over a meal after a full day of ministering in prison.

### Saturday

Because I was taking pictures and photo permission had been granted only at Staton and Kilby, I split from the Pennyrile team. They went to Easterling CF, and I met the Carter team at Staton. When we got to the front gate, we had to wait about 15 minutes and then were told we could come in for just one game due to the prison being short on staff that day. We decided to play a 9-inning game but had to stop after seven innings. In that time over 70 runs had been scored, and we needed to wrap things up and move on in order to stay on schedule. If my memory is correct, the inmates batted first and scored about 23 runs in the top of the first inning! They really enjoyed that! It took the Carter team a few innings to get cranked up, but they eventually made it a respectable game and lost by only about 12 runs.

I left the prison and went to lunch with the Carter team





and then back to Staton to meet the Erb team. The games that afternoon were the opposite of the morning game with the Erb team jumping out to a huge lead and dominating throughout both games. After we played our allotted time and left the prison, the Erb team went to a local motel where they used one room to run 10 guys through the shower before jumping into their small bus and heading back to Pennsylvania. I drove back to Atmore.

### Final Thoughts

Obviously, my perspective this year was in the Montgomery area. There were also three teams based in Atmore who played softball in the southern prisons. They too faced some challenges with fields being too wet and prisons not allowing schedules to go as planned for various reasons. Overall, though, it was a great time. From comments I heard along the

way, it was very obvious that this event means a lot to the men in prison. When they start recalling specific players and details from games three and four years ago, I know it has a huge impact on them.

We Care is grateful for all the guys who played and for their families who allowed them to come (especially with some of them not getting home until late on Mother's Day). We also appreciate the business sponsors who helped to cover some of the costs. We are thankful for all the prison officials who accommodated the volunteers entering the facilities and who supervised the ball games, and we thank everyone who covered this event in prayer. Most of all, we are grateful to God for the open doors to do this kind of outreach and for His protection and guidance over the course of these three days. We trust that the Gospel that was presented during the mound ministry time at each prison will produce fruit in due time.





# Partnership in Ministry

By James Smoker

God calls and uses different people in His work. Especially when it comes to reaching incarcerated individuals, I am amazed to see how He does it, for a couple of reasons. First, it takes a lot of effort to meet the requirements to enter a prison. Then, after you arrive there are no guarantees you will be allowed entrance. Denial can happen for any of a number of various reasons, usually having to do with security. So when a ministry from a long distance is wanting to visit a prison in Alabama, I know those people have a special calling on their life and are willing to count the cost.

Over the past few months, we were able to host two different ministries from Texas that came to Atmore desiring to minister to the men in Holman and Fountain Correctional Facilities. The question might be asked, "How did Erick Wilson and Forgiven Felons find us here in Alabama?" The answer has to do with an inmate connection.

One of the apps the men in prison have access to on their tablets has Christian-based podcasts, music, and ministries.

Inmate "Jim" heard both of these ministries and asked if I would reach out to them with an invitation to visit.

It was awesome to see how God used these ministries to reach out to the incarcerated men. They brought hearts of compassion for the men and their own stories of how God worked in their lives. Their willingness to sacrifice so much and follow through with a personal visit gave evidence that Erick and Forgiven Felons were called to this. The message of hope through Jesus Christ was an encouragement to those who were struggling and pointed the lost to Christ.

In one particular service God touched inmate "Joe" in a special way, and he gave his life to the Lord. Joe has spent 20+ years in prison and will be ending his sentence in a few months. As a chaplain, I am blessed to have different individuals partner with us in ministry. Just maybe God sent someone all the way from Texas for the seeds in Joe's life to finally bear fruit. Once again he heard the message, and this time he surrendered his life to the Lord. No monetary value can be placed on a soul being saved!

## NEWS

### EXPANSION OF PTF



The Pathway to Freedom (PTF) program at Bibb Correctional Facility recently expanded to include a second dorm. This additional dorm of 106 men plus the original dorm of 80 men brings the total enrollment to 186. Administered under the leadership of We Care Program, PTF's Bible-centered classes and curriculum are designed to point men to Jesus and equip them for victorious Christian living both inside and outside of prison. The PTF classes are also being taught at Century Correctional Institution in the faith dorm.

### TRANSITIONS

After serving for three years as bookkeeper, Melinda Huber recently terminated her time with We Care. In perfect timing God sent Savilla McGhee to fill that need. With previous connections and history in Atmore, Savilla was already planning to move back to the area from Blountstown, Florida, and God orchestrated the details for her to step into the role Melinda was vacating. Thank you, Melinda, for a job well done! Best wishes to you in your new pursuits. And welcome, Savilla! We are glad to have you on our office staff.



Savilla McGhee

Anna Miller also recently ended her service with We Care. We thank God for her investment and impact in the lives of so many women during her ministry as a prison chaplain. God bless you, Anna, as you continue to follow His leading in your life!



# From the Field

## Eddie Miller

Various Prisons  
AL & FL



**G**reetings, Brothers and Sisters. Before I proceed any further I have to give God the glory. It is because of Him that I am going into the prisons. I was incarcerated with many of those men. During that time God was preparing me for the work I have been doing about six years now in Alabama and Florida. This is the work of God, and I am grateful that He counted me worthy. He has opened doors for me just because He can.

I told the Lord when I was in prison that whatever doors He opens for me I am committed. I have gone into youth centers and county jails. In February I was blessed to go into the intake prison in Orlando, Florida. This is where men first go when they are sentenced to prison in Florida. The population is about 4,000. Over the course of three services in one day, where 1,500 men heard the Word, 396 committed to Jesus Christ and about 150 recommitted.

The Spirit of the Lord is moving in prisons; men are hungry for the word of God. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of baptizing nine men. Others have come to me saying they want to be baptized. Recently at Santa Rosa prison one of the men stood up and gave a testimony. He said that he talked to someone who served time with me in Alabama. They told him the same way I am serving the Lord now I was serving Him in prison. Praise God.

## Wendy Seabrook

Montg. Women's Facility  
Montgomery, AL



**D**o I worry? If I'm being honest with myself, the answer is yes. Having completed my first year as chaplain at Montgomery Women's Facility, my worries cover a broad spectrum. I wonder when the dryer in Laundry will be fixed and if the fans will work efficiently in the hot summer months. I also worry about low Bible study attendance and if the women will truly experience God's presence and freedom while incarcerated. My biggest worry: Do the women see Jesus through me?

When I start going down the rabbit hole of irrational

worry and fear, I'm often reminded of what Philippians 4:6 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done." (NLT)

This scripture was applied very practically one evening as the sun was setting on the facility. Word spread through the dorm that Chap was forming a "prayer circle" outside Laundry. What a blessing it was to watch woman after woman leave her bed and stride toward the circle. We grasped hands, and 25 of us talked about how prayer changes hearts, relationships and situations. Then we did what Philippians 4:6 says. We prayed, deeply and emotionally, pouring out our needs and thanksgiving before Him. We prayed for God to search each heart and do what He does best: heal, deliver and redeem. And in that moment our hearts were one with the Lord, and worry was beyond the fence.

## Marcus Freed

London Corr. Institution  
London, OH



**A** few weeks back, I was invited to teach a prison class on gratitude. I ventured to another correctional facility to glean insights from residents enrolled in a leadership program. My inquiry was simple yet profound: "How do you maintain an attitude of gratitude?"

Among the voices that resonated, one stood out—let's call him Charlie. With a calm demeanor and wisdom drawn from lived experience, Charlie distilled his approach into three powerful words: "through constant thankfulness." Intrigued by his response, I probed deeper, asking how he sustains such an attitude. Without hesitation, he replied, "Jesus."

Charlie's words lingered with me long after our conversation. Despite facing a daunting 22-year incarceration with an additional 29 years ahead, his countenance radiated with a genuine smile. While many would succumb to despair under such circumstances, Charlie remained steadfast in his attitude of gratitude.

My acquaintance with Charlie spans over a decade, during which I've witnessed his remarkable journey. Engaged in the Ohio Penal Industries work program, he not only embraces employment but also extends his service to the chapel, offering his time whenever needed. Moreover, Charlie's artistic talent shines through his self-taught prowess in painting and pencil drawings—a testament to his resilience and creativity.



Reflecting on our shared history, I recall a poignant moment a decade ago when my late wife Brenda passed away. In a humble gesture of kindness, Charlie immortalized her memory by crafting a delicate pencil drawing based on a photograph from our small prison service. His artwork now graces the hall of the mayor's office in London, Ohio, an example of an artist in our community.

In Charlie's life, the guiding hand of Jesus intertwines with his unwavering commitment to gratitude. Through trials and tribulations, he has embraced a life shaped by constant thankfulness—a testament to the transformative power of faith and resilience.

## Thrift Store Update

We continue to wait on the drawings to be finalized by the architect and approved by the City of Atmore for our new Thrift Store. As of the middle of June, it appears we are finally nearing the end of this step. Next will be ordering the building and getting it erected. IF we receive the final plans by early July, the building should be up by the end of October. At this point, we hope to be ready for volunteers by early November. For those considering coming to help, thanks for your patience as we continue to wait on God's timing!

## Is God stirring your heart for closer involvement in prison ministry?



[www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org)



## Chaplains Needed

**Openings in several locations in  
Alabama and Florida**

### **Main Qualification:**

Love for God and desire to see men and women come to know Christ and walk with Him in their daily lives

Contact **James Smoker** to explore the possibility of serving with We Care Program.

251-368-8818

[james@wecareprogram.org](mailto:james@wecareprogram.org)





## FOLLOWING GOD'S LEADING

**A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT**

[don@wecareprogram.org](mailto:don@wecareprogram.org)

On a cold rainy day in mid-December of 2004, still new in my role as Vice President, I had the opportunity to help find housing for a new chaplain coming to serve with We Care. In response to God's call to her, Anna Miller was in the process of relocating from Indiana to Alabama to reach out to women in prison. When we talked recently, Anna and I both recalled that day vividly, reminiscing how God directed us as we both explored new territory. Fast forward to the end of May 2024 and the official end of Anna's time of service with We Care. Anna is now sensing God's leading into a new season in her life, which involves the possibility of starting a ministry to women back in her home state of Indiana.

Anna was a blessing to have as part of our We Care



staff for the past 19 ½ years. Not only did she minister to countless ladies in prison, but she also walked with and supported many women as they adjusted to life outside prison after their release. Anna's calm demeanor and faithful presence over the years was a stabilizing factor in the lives of these women who were in the midst of some difficult circumstances. Thank you, Anna, for all that you did to serve God through the ministry of We Care!

So now who is next? You don't have to commit to stay for 19 ½ years, but there is a great need for more chaplains, both men and women, to serve in the prisons of Alabama and northwest Florida. Please consider this opportunity and let us know if God might be leading you to explore some new territory, like Anna did almost 20 years ago.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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